for the expansion of National T.B. Control Programme to 102 districts covering population of 271 million, for its financial assistance; and

(b) if so, the responose of the World Bank to the above proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The project proposal has been apprised by the World Bank and as per their AIDE-MEMOIRE, the project will constitute a time slice financing of the National TB Control Programme over 6 years with the purpose of strengthening the Programme nation-wide and setting up the institutional and managerial infrastructure to facilitate a gradual expansion of the revised strategy for TB Control to the entire country within 8--12 years time frame.

Difficulties faced by farmers for loans

3490. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that farmers have to face a lot of difficulties in getting loans in the country particularly in the State of Punjab;

(b) if so, whether Government proposes to simplify the rules prescribed therefor; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The amount of loans disbursed by commercial banks, including nationalised banks, under Annual Credit Plan for the last three years for agriculture and allied activities in Punjab, as reported by Reserve Bank of India, is given below:

(Rs. in Lakhs)

Year	Amount
1993-94	42067
1994-95	49149
1995-96	60781

It may be seen from the above that the disbursal of loans by banks for the agriculture sector has been on the increase in the State of Punjab.

(b) and (c) RBI has advised all scheduled commercial banks to make every effort to achieve the stipulated target and sub-targets for lending to priority sector at the earliest. It has also taken the following additional steps to ensure enhanced flaw of credit to agricultural sector:—

(i) Simplified application forms have been made avilable which are also available in regional languages;

(ii) Prescription of scales of finance for crop loans as worked out by technical committees constituted in each district for various crops and their uniform adoption by banks;

(iii) Disposal of loan applications upto Rs. 25,000/- within a fortnight and those over Rs. 25,000/- within 8 to 9 weeks;

(iv) Delegation of appropriate sanctioning powers to rural branch managers so that majority of loan applications from weaker sections are sanctioned at branch level itself;

(v) Liberal guidelines in regard to requirement of collateral security by way of mortgage of land/charge on landor third party guarantee;

(vi) The public sector banks have introduced the Agricultural Credit

Card for for farmers with good track record which enables farmers to secure production credit instantly and dispense with procedural formalities;

(vii) To ensure timely and adequate credit for sustaining agricultural production, banks have been asked to extend a flexible line of credit to eligible farmers in the form of cash credit facility which would meet their composite credit requirments;

(viii) Banks have been asked to finance high-tech activities like aquaculture, floriculture, tissue-culture, bio-technology, etc; and

(ix) Banks have been asked to draw up annual special credit plans with a view to achieving a distinct and market improvement in the flow of credit to agriculture.

Airlinking of Ahmedabad airport with stations abroad

3491. SHRI RAJUBAHI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Ahmedabad airport is airlinked with only a few stations abroad, if so, the names of the foreign airports it is linked with at present;

(b) whether there are any proposals to link Ahmedabad with various other international destinations, if so, with which ones; and

(c) whether in view of the trade and business importance of Ahmedabad, besides other factors, Government are examining the matter to link this Airport with other foreign stations of economic importance; if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (c) Ahmedabad is directly linked with Muscat, Sharjah and Kuwait by Indian Airlines services. Ahmedabad is also airlinked to a number of other foreign stations through hub and spoke flights over Mumbai and Delhi. The traffic potential between Ahmedabad and other international destinations including Nairobi is presently not sufficient to operate commercially viable direct services.

News-item regarding MRTP probe into PTA pricing policy

3492. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN:

Will the Minister of COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the news-item appearing in the Business Standard of 4th June, 1996, under the caption "Reliance faces MRTP probe into PTA pricing policy" come to the notice of Government;

(b) if so, the nature of offence allegedly committed by the company;

(c) what was the result of the probe; and

(d) what action is proposed to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Director General of Investigation and Registration has initiated suo-moto investigation under Section 11(2) of the MRTP Act. 1969 to study the price-mechanism and marketing arrangements followed by Reliance Industries Ltd., Bombay in respect of Purified Teraphthalic Acid (PTA) and for this purpose a letter calling for certain information/documents has been issued by him to the company on 3.6.1996. The relevant information from the company is still awaited.